

*Job, chap. 32, ver. 8. "But there is a Spirit in Man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."*

God having made man a free agent and lord of the creation, it was necessary to endow him with Reason, that he might use his faculties with discretion, and tame the beasts of the field for his use. He has done this, and amply too. Indeed, the various gifts of the Supreme Being not only demand our most grateful acknowledgments, but our most solemn praise. We should meditate on the favour of our Creator, and contemplate the goodness and the mercy of the Lord.

God hath made all things for his own glory. The Royal Prophet, inspired with a true sense of this great maxim, calls on the host of heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that therein is, the times and seasons, men and all living creatures, to praise and thank the Almighty God for his blessings bestowed on man, and on all the works of the creation. "Praise the Lord, all ye creatures, and let every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord."

From what has been advanced on former occasions, respecting the senses of Hearing, Seeing, and the like, it is plain that man is composed of many faculties, which are collectively reduced to one active



principle called Reason, which I shall consider in three different points of view.

I will first shew the Powers which constitute the gift of reason.

Secondly, The Advantages resulting from a proper use of it, &

Thirdly, The Wretchedness attendant on the loss of it.

1. First then, it is to be observed, that the grand characteristic of man, that faculty that places him above the rest of the animal creation, is what we call Reason. Herein man is truly the image of his Creator, made after his own likeness. Human nature is exalted by it, and we are hence made partakers of innumerable sources, from whence spring a variety of pleasurable sensations and real enjoyments both of mind and body.

The mind of man, which may be called his Rational principle, consists of two parts, the Understanding and the Will. The former acts as a moderator over the latter. What the Will consents to, the Understanding duly considers, and either enjoins or restrains, according to what it judges right. Where the Understanding is Weak, the Will is too apt to take the lead. Thus, a volatile mind gives the will free power to act as it pleases and pursue its own pleasures, but a Sound understanding examines well the fitness or unfitness of what the inclination proposes, and governs it accordingly. A man may say to himself, I have now fifty pounds in possession, it will afford fifty days of pleasure and recreation in expending it, perhaps I may not live much longer, and of course may want an opportunity of gratifying my passion. The brightness of the enjoyment glitters in the eyes of the Sensualist---he indulges the thought;---his Will is ready to comply with his inclination, and probably sets about to perform



this act of imprudence; when his understanding shall interfere. The matter is referred to Reason, who with an impartial judgment prevents the will from carrying into execution a measure, which, probably, might be attended with the worst of consequences.

The passions of the mind, such as Grief, Fear, Horror, and Dismay; Joy, Love, Peace, and Tranquillity, all know their standard of regulation, through the medium of Reason. The loss of a darling child, a beloved wife, a tender husband, an affectionate parent or friend;--in all these cases Reason moderates his sorrow. By Reason, the intrinsic worth of every thing is known, and the loss of every thing is reconciled.--Fear is disarmed, Horror loses its sting, and Dismay is forced to fly at its approach.

So Love and Joy are governed solely by the prudence of Reason; without it, every pleasing passion would expand into irregularity, disorder, and pain. The Lover would launch out into the wildness of insanity; joyful news would turn the brain; Tranquillity would expose the source from which its serenity arose--would be thus laid open to the inroads of the crafty, and the fraudulent;--and even the blessings of Peace would bring on the irrational mind, a world of trouble. But God has so tempered the mind by Reason, that all the harmony of soul and body flows from this source; the human frame is free from disorder, and the man is at peace within himself.

Reason, then, is the governing principle, that grand characteristic that distinguishes men from brutes, and gives him even the command, not only of them, but of himself.

2. Let us now consider its Advantages.

The Advantages arising from a right use of Reason, are obvious



to every discerning mind. Without its guidance, every action of man partakes of error, and is frequently directed into wrong pursuits. The power of the mind, governed and directed by this godlike attribute, are truly astonishing. The Fire of the Poet, the Eloquence of the Orator, the Sublimity of the Philosopher, the wonder-working Calculation of the Mathematician, and every species of literary ability, is wholly under the cognizance of Reason; even the lofty domes of God's celestial residence are all explored by the daring imagination of the reasonable mind. Every feature of illumined Fancy--every trace of unlimited Conception--every shoot of Genius, and every stroke of the grandest imagery, all partake of the colouring of Reason;--without it, all would be forced, extravagant, and often ridiculous; guarded by its unerring hand, all is just--all is right.

It is by reason, that Man is said to be formed in the likeness of God.--By this Faculty his powers are Divine. He, like his Maker, enters into all the economy of nature, and searches into the designs of Heaven. By comparing the Lesser works of creation with the Greater, he readily discovers a proportional. The wonders of the stars are reduced to the greatest exactness--the place and situation of every planet is found out, either at a former or subsequent period;--their revolutions, motions, and directions are ascertained;--eclipses, comets, and other extraordinary appearances are foretold and explained;--their appearances delineated, and the instant of their supernatural incident set forth. Man becomes, as it were, a Celestial being, and is invested with the Power of the Godhead.

Endued with Reason, man contemplates, not only the usefulness, but the Beauties and Wonders of the creation. The arched vault of heaven--the luminaries that rule both day and night--the floating



clouds full charged with fire and water--the fluctuating volume of air--all conspire to surprize and raise the thoughts of man to the majesty of the great Creator. The face of nature leads likewise to a similar end. Hills and vallies--mountains and plains--rocks and forests--woods and rivers--seas and lakes--the animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds--all have their influence. Beasts, birds, fishes, insects--the plants of the field and the treasures of the earth, severally conspire to exalt the mind of man to its Creator. Well may we cry out in the words of the Psalmist, "O Lord, how wonderful are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men; that they would offer him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and tell out all his works with gladness!"

By Reason--by this regulating principle of our thoughts and actions, we have a command over all the brute creation, and make them subservient to our will--we become competent to all the amazing tasks of skill and ingenuity. The mechanic, by studying the laws of motion and the principles of natural philosophy, discovers extraordinary powers, and lays the foundation of unlimited improvement. Every fabric is manufactured by the aid of reasoning ingenuity, and every thing in nature is converted to the use of man.

How noble, then, is the faculty of Reason! It may truly be called Godlike. It teaches us to imitate the vast Supreme, and proves us to be made after His great similitude.

Can there be a more forcible argument for religion, for the worship and praise of the Creator, than a retrospect of all his works? We



have had occasion to contemplate Man in his several parts; let us now pause and review him complete.

Were we, at any time, to see a lump of clay rise gradually from the ground, formed as man is, with beauty and with symmetry, and endowed with all those faculties and powers we possess--were we to see this figure, immediately on his creation, perform the operations of life, of sense, and reason--were we see him move with all that grace and elegance--speak with all that propriety and eloquence--reason with that justness and precision, and act with that accuracy, which the most accomplished do--What must our ideas be?--But to make a stronger impression on the mind, let us suppose we see this creature, rising by degrees, and finished part by part in some small course of time, and that when completely formed, the veins and arteries bored, the sinews and tendons laid, the joints fitted, the whole system filled with its blood and juices--God inspires with a vital principle, and instantly the blood shall take its course around the body, and a modest blush bespread the countenance beyond the power of art to imitate--How should we stand amazed!--but further, the image moves, it walks, it speaks. It moves with such majesty as proclaims it the lord of the creation, and it talks with such an accent, such sublimity of sentiment, as calls the attention of every ear, and leads its great Creator to enter into conversation with it. It argues with that precision as carries conviction with its words. I say, were we to see all this transacted before our eyes, we could not be heathens--we could not but be religious. Now this is an exact picture of Man's formation, the contemplation of which made holy David break into this rapturous acknowledgment, "Lord! I will give thee thanks, for I



am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well!"

Galen, we are told, who could not be brought to believe in the existence of a God; after he had carefully surveyed the frame of man, and viewed the fitness and usefulness of every part, and the beautiful composition of the whole, fell into a pang of devotion, and wrote a hymn to his Creator's praise.

3. Having seen the Advantages of Reason to men, we will, for a moment contemplate the Wretchedness attendant on the want of it.

Let us take a view of man from his birth to his death. In his infant state, from want of reason, as well as strength, he is Helpless and far below the rest of the animal creation. The new-born babe, was it entrusted to the care of any other creature than such as are endued with Reason, would soon be lost, and never have the age of manhood to boast of. In the early part of life, the powers of Reason are so weak, that a child may be said absolutely to want Understanding, and to have no other guide, than the natural propensities of his will; but under the tuition of riper years, his mind is formed, and he becomes a Rational creature.

The spring of life past, Reason ripens to maturity; all the faculties become strong and powerful, and every source of action produces its natural effect. The will is stimulated strongly by the passions, and the understanding exerts its strength with vigour, to counteract the propensities of those passions, and keep them within bounds.--Lust is softened into Love--Wrath moderated into justifiable Resentment--Covetousness into Frugality, and Extravagance into Liberality. In short, all the turbulent passions are curbed and over-ruled. The judicious man, who acts in conformity to Reason,



is neither rash, nor timid, but firm and determinate, governing himself with prudence and discretion.

But view nature swerving from the centroul of Reason, and how lamentable is the prospect! Governed chiefly by his Will, man is a slave to his passions, and a nuisance to society. Anger tears him, Jealousy gnaws him, Intemperance maddens him--He is but one degree short of a Lunatic. See him under the total loss of understanding, and he is lunatic Altogether, and "his mouth must be held with bit and bridle." The well-governed man, who was the servant of God and the friend of his fellow-creature, void of Reason, is immured within the walls of an hospital or a Bedlam--a wretched Lunatic, deprived of understanding--deprived of sense. Mark the incoherence of his tongue! Folly and error pervade the whole of his conversation--his actions are those of frantic disorder--the beasts of the forest are not more ferocious than Him--his mind is stored with the most extravagant notions--the fictions of fancy, he conceives to be Real representations--he is busied with trifles, and the man is a driveler. In a word, he is under the dominion of the most melancholy of all human afflictions; glaring inconsistency has got possession of his soul, and "misery and wretchedness are come upon him."

How affecting, also, is such a condition to the relations of the lunatic! Deprived of every enjoyment of life, incapable of reflection, and destitute of shame, the victim of insanity exhibits a deplorable example of the want of Reason, and his friends and connexions, in compassion to his infirmities, wish him out of the world.



Let us thank then and praise God for this inestimable benefit, and adore that Benevolent Power, whose mercy is over all his works. We should always have in view that, in the "day of prosperity, there is a forgetfulness of affliction; and in the day of affliction, there is no more remembrance of Prosperity:" for the hand of plenty, and the rod of adversity, have a power over the sons of men, and Forgetfulness is attendant upon both. Hence we may learn, that a recollection of former situations is highly pleasing and acceptable to God; we should be grateful for benefits received, and kiss the rod that chastises us; knowing, that whether we receive good or evil at the hands of God, it is all for some wise purpose; and remembering that, "prosperity and adversity, life and death, poverty and riches, come of the Lord." "Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of the law, are also of the Lord;" "Love and the way of good works are from him;" "Power and darkness had their beginning with sinners, and shall wax old with them, but the gift of the Lord remaineth with the godly."

What then shall we think of those men, who, blessed with this divine gift, shall at all times wantonly throw it away, and deprive themselves of their reason by intemperance and drunkenness? He can have but a sorry idea of the advantages of this Blessing, who will thus sacrifice it to the pleasures of drinking. For what is intoxication but the loss of Reason, and what is drunkenness but idiotism and madness? Those who give way to it, lose all the dignity of man, put themselves on a level with the brute creation, and are "like the horse & mule who have no understanding," and counteract the design of Heaven; they fly in the face of Om-



ripostence, reject his mercies, and spurn at the happiness designed them: of course the Sin is equal to the Folly.

Grant then, Almighty God, that we may know ourselves better; that we may retain a just sense of this inestimable blessing, which thou hast been pleased to bestow on us; that we may make a proper use of it, and fulfill the end for which it was given us! "For he that getteth Wisdom loveth his own soul, and he that keepeth Understanding shall find good."

Trusler. A Manuscript.

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Please to alter the following Errata in this Sermon with the Pen.

Page 3. line 9, for his, read our

25, for men, read man

6. 15, read inspires it

7. 9, for wretchness, read wretchedness

8. 3, for centroul, read controul

8, after he is, read a



